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RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ARS HARD-LINERS SKEPTICAL OF ETHIOPIAN WITHDRAWAL
PLANS

¶1. (SBU) In a series of two December 9 press releases, The Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) hard-liners in Asmara bitterly criticized the Djibouti Agreement and Ethiopian plans to withdraw from Somalia. The ARS dissidents voiced doubt concerning Ethiopian withdrawal intentions and labeled the act as an attempt to justify future occupation. The ARS letter is perfectly timed with a December 10 article in the Eritrean Profile, the government-owned propaganda newspaper, entitled "Ethiopia's Latest Deceptive Ploy: Withdrawing From Somalia." The arguments used in both the ARS press releases and the newspaper article (written by a die-hard Eritrean diaspora member) are near mirror images. The article and the press releases both describe the Djibouti Agreement as a "farce." They also both interchangeably label Ethiopia's presence as a "proxy invasion" designed to destabilize the Horn.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: It is not clear who is driving the ARS hard-line agenda. Though the consensus among Somali contacts is that Sheikh Aways sets the pace, there is clearly strong GSE influence in the ARS hard-line rhetoric. End Comment.
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